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# Food & Nutrition

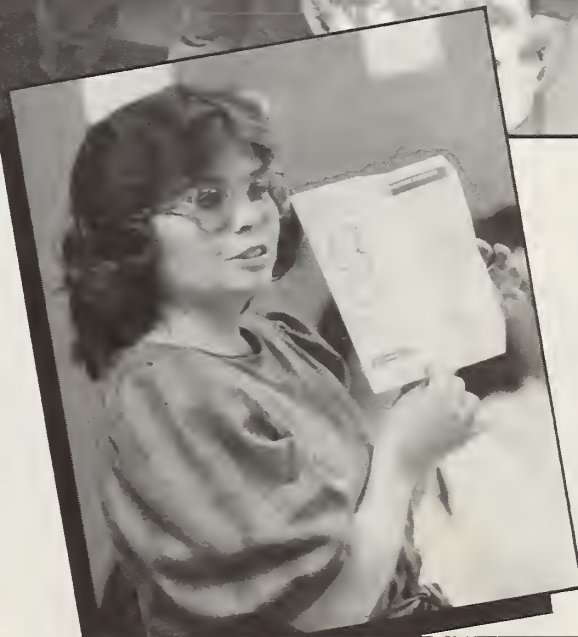
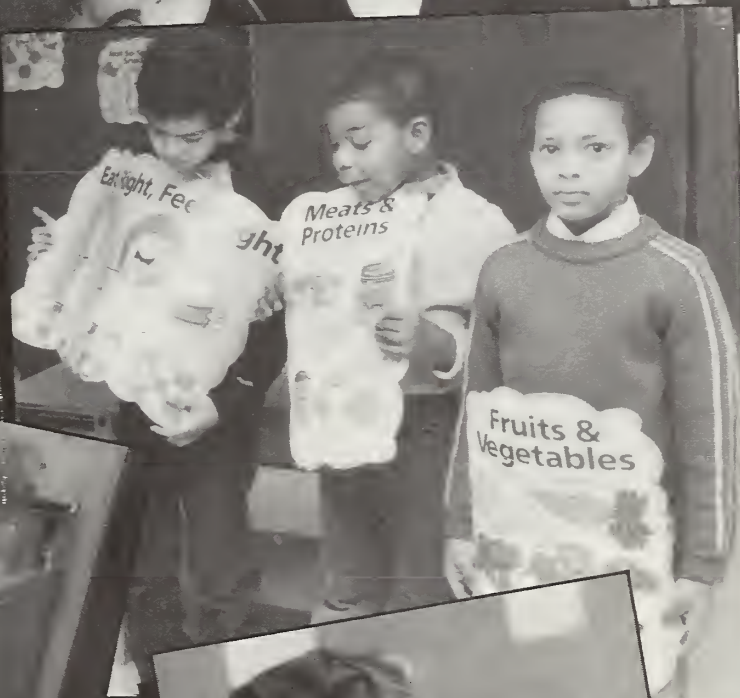
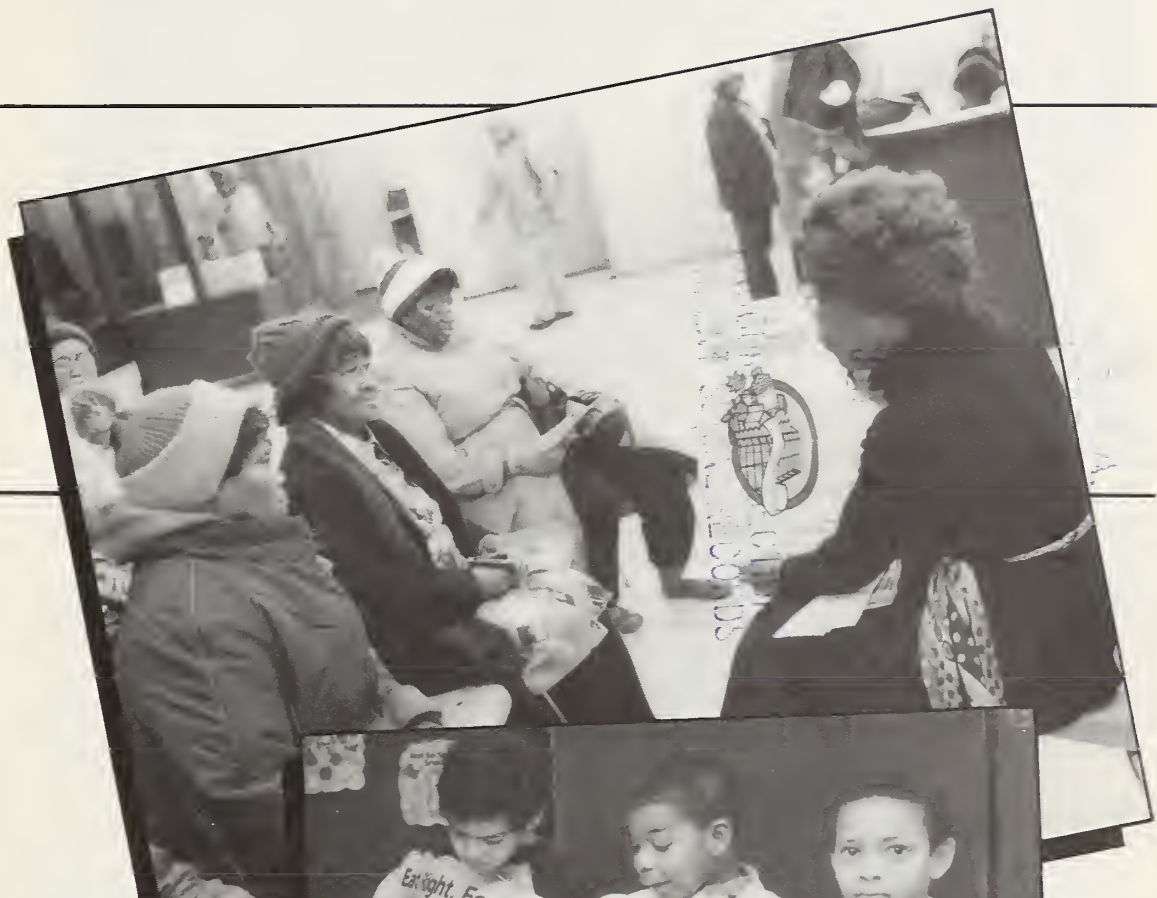
April 1985    Volume 15    Number 2

■ This issue, like our April issue last year, takes a look at some interesting nutrition education efforts around the country.

■ Our lead article reports on the new "Make Your Food Dollars Count" materials USDA has developed specifically for low-income audiences.

■ Other articles tell how the new materials are being used and how people have used or are using the "Making Food Dollars Count" booklet USDA put together in 1983.

■ We also have some advice from nutrition professionals on working with low-income audiences, and an article on a new nutrition education project that is being sponsored jointly by a Boston school district, USDA, and the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation.





# Helping People Buy Better...and Eat Better

■ Here's a way to eat better! Choose from each of these food groups every day. Fruits and vegetables. Breads, cereals, rice and pasta. Milk, and foods made from milk. Dry beans, peanut butter, eggs, fish, poultry and meat.

And, of yes, avoid too much fat and salt and sugar! Good nutrition makes for a healthy body, and a mind that's sharp.

■ Confused about which size container of food is the best buy? For instance, one box of cornflakes has 18 ounces; another has 12. And each box has a different price. What you want to know is which box gives you a pound of cornflakes for the least money.

Most stores figure the price per pound for you. They put this price on the unit price sticker located on the shelf below the product. Compare unit prices. The container with the lowest price per unit is the best buy...

■ Wanna tell ya one thing, this is how I feel. Gotta have some snacks between my meals!...I make 'em nutritious, as well as delicious...milk and fruit—it's a fruit shake...celery and peanut butter...cereal and milk...Gonna love this snack, it's smooth as silk.

This message is from the USDA, who says 'Make your food dollars count!'

**F**rom coast to coast and from north to south, these messages along with five others are being heard on radios everywhere. They are part of a nationwide information project USDA has launched to help food stamp recipients and other low-income families get more nutritional value for their food dollars.

"What we've done with this project," says George Braley, Deputy Administrator of Special Nutrition Programs for USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), "is taken the nutrition education efforts USDA has made in the past and brought them to their logical conclusion.

"We've done this by developing and distributing materials that low-income consumers with limited reading skills can read or hear and easily understand."

## **Project builds on earlier effort**

The new materials have been developed as "Part Two" of the nutrition education project USDA initiated in 1983.

In the first part of the project, the Department prepared a booklet containing meal plans, recipes, and food buying tips. The booklets were introduced at a series of workshops held in seven cities throughout the country.





The 1983 booklet, called *Making Food Dollars Count—Nutritious Meals at Low Cost*, was written at a high reading level and was intended for nutrition professionals, paraprofessionals, social service workers, and community leaders who work with low-income families.

"This was a fine starting point," says Braley. "But we learned from this experience that there was a need for something tangible that low-income participants in a workshop or one-on-one activity could take home with them as a reminder of what they had just learned."

In November 1983, several USDA agencies formed a nutrition education task force to come up with ideas on the best materials for low-income audiences.

In addition to representatives from FNS, which would have primary responsibility for developing and distributing the materials, the task force included representatives from the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Human Nutrition Information Service, the Office of Governmental and Public Affairs, the Extension Service, and the Office of the Consumer Advisor.

During a series of meetings and with the input of food stamp eligibility workers and supervisors, the group identified major concepts to be developed in the materials.

### "Buy better to eat better"

"What we came up with," says Patricia Daniels of FNS' Nutrition and Technical Services Division, "were two themes, 'Buy Better' and 'Eat Better'. We wanted to give people information that would help them develop specific skills—like knowing how to compare brands to get the best buys and to read labels for nutritional content.

"Another idea we wanted to get across was that with convenience foods you can spend a lot of money for fancy packaging and seasonings. We wanted people to see that you can get more for your money by doing things yourself—and often without a lot of extra time and trouble."

The materials FNS developed present these and other concepts in a number of different ways. They are being called *Make Your Food Dollars Count*—a slight change from the earlier *Making Food Dollars Count* booklet—to emphasize



their consumer orientation. The materials include:

- **Four pamphlets** in English and Spanish with two messages on each. The pamphlets can be displayed in social service offices, used in workshops or in one-on-one sessions with individuals, or mailed to food stamp recipients.

- **Two full-color posters** in English and Spanish for use in food stamp offices and other group settings.

- **A 12-minute slide show** that can be used with an accompanying cassette tape and narrative guide.

- **Eight 30- to 60-second radio public service announcements**—six in English and two in Spanish.

- **Nutrition and shopping messages** in English and Spanish in a reproducible format for use by magazines and newspapers.

- **A project guide** with suggestions for using the materials in local food stamp offices and for coordinating activities with community organizations.

### Careful planning included surveys

To ensure that the materials would be appropriate for and useful to food stamp recipients, staff from FNS headquarters and its Mid-Atlantic regional office showed the posters and pamphlets to a representative sampling of food program participants before the materials were printed in final form.

*Above and left:* Susan Mahan, an aide with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, visits a low-income homemaker in Quincy, Massachusetts. Using the new *Make Your Food Dollars Count* materials, Mahan talks about how to look for good buys and read labels for nutritional content.

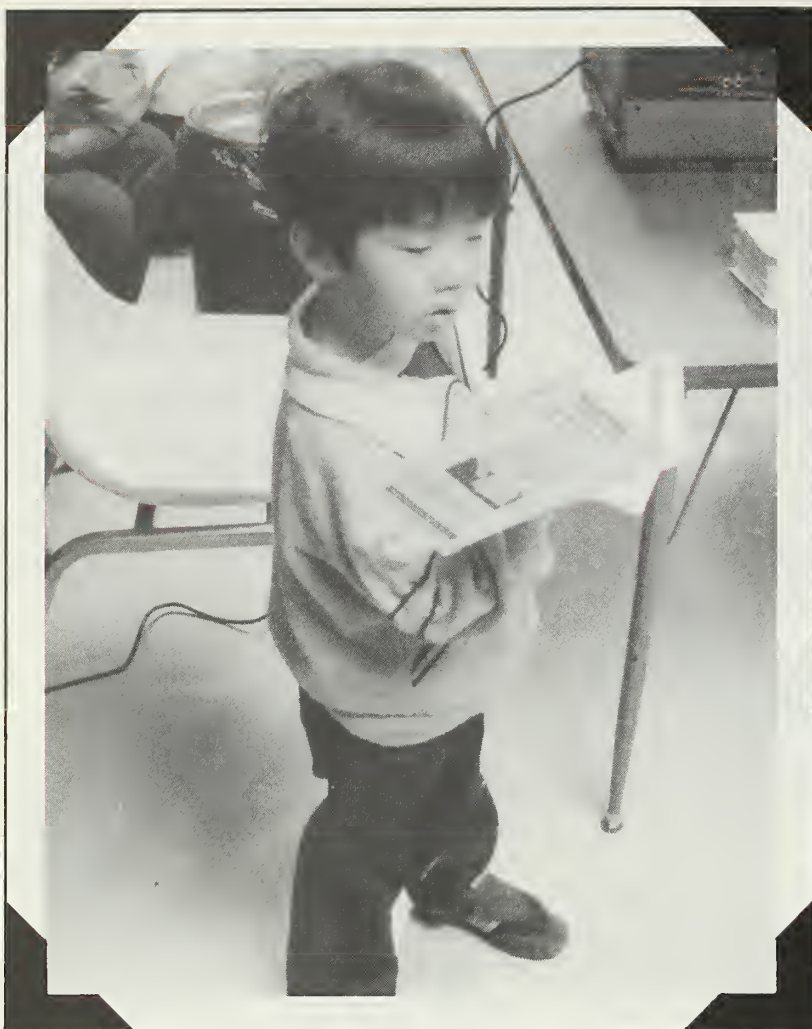
"We wanted to know how attractive food stamp recipients found the publications," says Daniels, "how well they understood and could accept them, and how well they could identify with the information in them.

"We made a lot of changes as a result of our surveys, but we made sure the format of the materials remained consistent, straightforward, and simple so that recipients could understand the messages.

"Most important to us throughout the project," says Daniels, "was getting the materials into the hands of the people who needed them. As a result, we made sure that we printed enough posters for every food stamp office and enough pamphlets for every food stamp household in the country.

"We also experimented with a different distribution system whereby local food stamp and Extension Service offices could order materials directly from FNS. Usually, local offices order from state warehouses. The system we are using for the new nutrition education materials eliminates the storage,





A young woman and her son look over the new USDA pamphlets as they wait to be certified for food stamps in an Oklahoma City welfare office.

handling, and transportation of materials from regional and state offices to the local level."

FNS has also taken extra care in packaging and distributing the materials put together for use by newspapers, magazines, and radio stations.

To help food editors reach their readers, FNS prepared 6,000 copies of the "camera-ready" nutrition and shopping messages in English and Spanish. The messages are attractively illustrated and come in a one-, two-, or three-column reproducible format that can easily be inserted into newspaper or magazine layouts.

The public service announcements are on a record that comes in a cardboard folder with the text, an introductory letter, and a response card printed on the inside. FNS has sent the records to radio stations throughout the country. More than 1,000 stations have returned response cards to FNS saying they are regularly using the announcements.

#### **Materials introduced at seven workshops**

The new materials were introduced last summer and fall at workshops the seven FNS regional

offices held in each of their areas. The workshops, some of which FNS co-sponsored with state and local groups, were in: Oklahoma City; Memphis; Minneapolis; Kansas City, Missouri; Wheeling, West Virginia; Seattle; and Newton, Massachusetts.

Workshop participants included people who work at all levels in the food stamp and WIC programs; people from federal, state, and local departments of education and health; nutrition professionals and paraprofessional aides from the Cooperative Extension Service and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP); university instructors and students; community leaders working with soup kitchens, food pantries, senior citizen organizations, and Indian groups; and others who share the common goal of helping low-income people.

Workshop coordinators hoped the sessions would engender a spirit of cooperation and sharing among these diverse groups. "I am hopeful that each one of us here today takes the opportunity to meet some people in the area so we can make more referrals across the lines of our organizations," Margaret Randall, an EFNEP leader in Massachusetts and co-sponsor of the Newton

workshop, told her group at the opening session.

"We get hung up on organization and turf too many times," she added. "When you come together with a common subject matter, I think that tends to dissolve some of the differences."

The kind of sharing coordinators hoped for took place in workshop after workshop. Participants learned about the materials, saw EFNEP aides and FNS nutritionists demonstrate buying techniques from the project guide, and shared with each other ideas on how they could use the materials in future workshops or as part of their ongoing nutrition education work.

Working in small groups, they explored suggestions for getting the materials to the people who need them. Among their suggestions were:

- distributing the materials at elderly feeding centers;

Meeting with a group of food stamp recipients in Memphis, nutrition educator Alberta Gaines holds up the "Buy Better" poster. The poster is one of two full-color posters USDA has developed for the nutrition information campaign.



- having them delivered with home-delivered meals;
- making them available at social security offices and offices for the aging;
- distributing them at food banks, soup kitchens, and food pantries;
- using them at food stamp offices and at WIC sites;
- sending out pamphlets with food stamp authorization-to-participate cards; and
- inviting EFNEP aides to come into food stamp office waiting rooms and do demonstrations.

### **Ideas begin to take shape**

In many areas across the country, these ideas are beginning to take shape, plans are being made, and the materials are being used. Here are some examples of ways people are using the materials in their programs or planning special activities with them:

■ In Wheeling, West Virginia, social worker Mary Dolan set up a workshop at the local food stamp office after attending the Make Your Food Dollars Count workshop in her area. Dolan works at the House of the Carpenter, an urban mission of the United Methodist Church that supplies food and clothing on an emergency basis to needy families.

In the future, Dolan would like to

teach families who come to the mission so they can expand their knowledge of nutrition and food budgeting. This, she feels, will help them become less reliant on community services.

"If these clients are not educated to use their food stamps in the best way," she says, "they pass bad habits on to their kids. I'd like to help them learn to use their food stamps better."

■ Nutrition student Penny Klosterman has also helped reach low-income families in West Virginia. Following the Wheeling workshop, Klosterman volunteered to pass out the new nutrition education materials at a site where USDA-donated foods were being distributed through the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Her efforts helped about 3,000 low-income people receive the information.

■ In Atlanta, Marilynn Berry, a graduate student in community health nutrition, did a demonstration with the materials at a WIC clinic. She found that she got good responses when she related her personal experiences to the materials. "As a single parent," says Berry, "I've had a lot of experience stretching my food dollars."

■ At Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky, Mar-

garet Ann McCarthy's graduate students in community nutrition have been conducting workshops for various groups. The students have held workshops for the elderly, WIC participants, the mentally retarded, Head Start parents, single parent students, and correctional institution inmates in the soon-to-be-released program.

Some of the lessons they took from the project guide. "In Montgomery County, for example," says McCarthy, "a student who worked with the elderly did a can cutting of generic, store, and name brands and had the elderly taste the food."

According to McCarthy, the students have had no trouble adapting the USDA materials to the needs of their different workshops. "The advantage of the Make Your Food Dollars Count materials," she says, "is that they are flexible and can be used in various ways."

■ In Detroit and Chicago, nutrition education committees—made up of members who volunteered their time after attending the introductory Make Your Food Dollars Count workshops—are organizing speakers' bureaus. They give speakers the new materials to use with low-income people wherever there is a need in their communities.





The speakers are volunteers who are professionals, paraprofessionals, and university students in the nutrition and dietetic fields. Helping the hungry is their main concern.

Says Catherine Sullivan, head of the Detroit committee, "There are a lot of hungry people in Detroit, and they may be hungry because they can't stretch the little money they have. We think we can have an impact by teaching them how to shop and best use their food stamp money."

In New York State, the Food Stamp Bureau of the Department of Social Services is promoting good nutritional practices among the low-income by issuing grant money to local communities. Buffalo, one of the recipients of the grant money, is using the Make Your Food Dollars Count materials in a two-phase project in the west side of Erie County.

The first phase of the project helps people with purchasing, and the second helps them plan and create nutritious meals.

"The posters and pamphlets are exactly on target on those two themes," says Marnie Leverett, manager of the nutrition education grant at the social services training project. "We're saturating the community with them and referring to them every time we do a nutrition education presentation."

Local food stamp offices are using the materials in a variety of ways. In Brooklyn, New York, for example, food stamp workers are using the materials to do nutrition education demonstrations in waiting rooms. In Illinois, EFNEP workers are doing the same on a pilot basis in Chicago, and the materials are available in waiting rooms throughout the state.

In Washington State, Sjoerd Kiers and Natalie Gonzalez from the State Department of Social and Health Services are planning to have State Cooperative Extension aides visit 30 to 35 of the state's 50 local offices. The aides will do demonstrations, show the slide and tape presentation, and get the brochures into people's hands.

In Vermont, EFNEP Extension specialist Alice Wright has written four half-hour lesson plans based on the Make Your Food Dollars

## TO FIND THE BEST MEAT BUYS

1. Look at the package of meat. Decide on the number of family meals you can get from it.
2. Look at the package price. Divide the number of family meals into the package price. This gives you the meal cost.
3. Compare the meal cost of different meats.



### Examples of meal costs for a family of 3:

Whole Chicken for 2 meals	Ground Beef for 2 meals	Fish for 1 meal	Liver for 1 meal	Rump Roast for 4 meals
				
\$1.29 2 ) \$2.58	\$1.11 2 ) \$2.22	\$2.04 1 ) \$2.04	\$ .69 1 ) \$ .69	\$2.25 4 ) \$9.00

**Each week pick the best buy for your family's meals.**

Count pamphlets. EFNEP aides are going to food stamp offices and enrolling food stamp participants in a 4-week nutrition education course based on these lesson plans. The introduction to the course is the slide show. Those who finish the course can continue in the EFNEP program if they would like.

Many different age and ethnic groups have been benefitting from the Make Your Food Dollars Count materials. In North Carolina, Georgia Kannon, a nutritionist with the Division of Aging in the State Department of Human Resources, has plans to use the materials with the elderly.

Kannon, who learned about the materials at a statewide conference on aging last fall, is working to have nutrition managers at selected sites use the materials to teach elderly people how to manage their food stamps better.

WIC nutritionist Fanny Rice has been using the posters and pamphlets with a group of Spanish-speaking migrants in Ruskin, Florida, which is south of Tampa. Further north, in Rhode Island, the

Narragansett Indians have asked Extension specialist Sybil Kaplan to work with their council members so they can do nutrition education on a one-to-one basis.

### Response has been positive

The response to the new materials has been positive. Jane Echenhofer, eligibility supervisor in Alexandria, Virginia, was one of the food stamp supervisors who participated in a brainstorming session on the materials in the fall of 1983. She says she's pleased with what USDA has developed.

"We found it encouraging that USDA not only requested our input," says Echenhofer, "but they actually used it in developing the materials. Since we deal with food stamp participants every day, that contact gives us a different perspective than someone working at the federal level."

"I think the flyers and other materials will benefit the clients," she adds. "They will be able to use some of these ideas when purchasing and cooking their food."

Having materials that could be



mailed to food stamp participants was one of the food stamp supervisors' suggestions to USDA. Echenhofer plans to mail the new pamphlets to participants with their authorization-to-participate (ATP) cards. She also hopes to have Extension aides do a workshop.

Susan Mahan, an EFNEP aide in Quincy, Massachusetts, also feels it's helpful to have materials people can look over at home.

"Hands-on demonstrations and field trips are important," she says, "but what you leave with people is also important. We try to give people information so they can decide on their own what they are going to do. The Make Your Food Dollars Count materials are a great teaching help.

"The materials are being used and will continue to be used," Mahan adds, "because they are very, very good. They are what we need to teach people, simple and basic."

#### Also available to general public

While free distribution of the materials is limited to agencies and organizations working with low-income people, anyone may purchase them. The posters and pamphlets are available from the Government Printing Office (GPO).

The slide/cassette tape is available from USDA's Photo Division.

The pamphlets are in sets of four and cost \$2.00 per set. When ordering the pamphlets, request "Make Your Food Dollars Count," GPO stock number 001-024-00215-1.

The two posters are \$3.50 each. For the "Buy Better" poster, ask for "Make Your Food Dollars Count," GPO stock number 001-24-00217-8. For the "Eat Better" poster, ask for "Make Your Food Dollars Count," stock number 001-024-00216-0.

GPO allows a 25-percent discount for orders of 100 copies or more of each item going to the same address. Send check or money order payable to: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. GPO also accepts Master Card or Visa credit card orders by telephone on this number: (202) 783-3238.

USDA's Photo Division is offering the slide/cassette tape for \$24.50. Make check or money order pay-

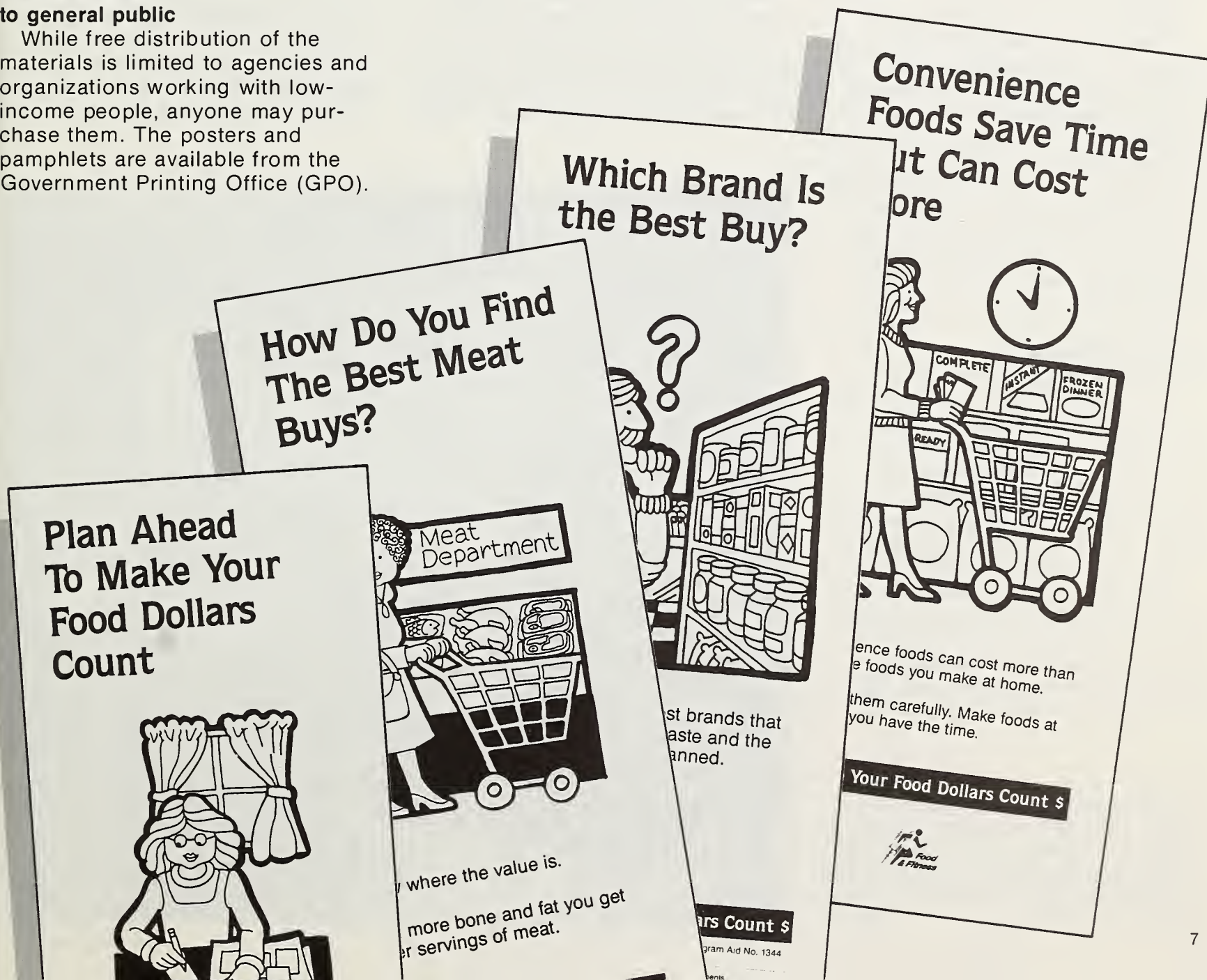
able to USDA and send to: USDA Photo Division, Office of Information, 14th and Independence Ave., S.W., Room 4407 South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250.

For more information on the Make Your Food Dollars Count project, contact the Nutrition and Technical Services staff of your nearest FNS regional office, or write:

Make Your Food Dollars Count  
Nutrition and Technical Services  
Division  
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA  
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

article by Bonnie W. Polk  
photos by Larry Rana

The Make Your Food Dollars Count materials are designed to help low-income shoppers plan and prepare nutritious and economical meals. Pictured below are the four pamphlets, each of which has two themes or messages. The illustration on page 6 is from the pamphlet on finding the best meat buys.





# Traveling Teams In Oklahoma Bring Nutrition Education To Food Stamp Offices

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services' nutrition and consumer education staff have been working to improve the nutritional awareness and food buying habits of low-income families for more than a decade.

According to programs supervisor Marilyn Henderson, the special unit was formed in the 1960's to help families who were receiving USDA-donated commodities.

"Our home economists traveled throughout the state doing food demonstrations with commodity products, developing recipes and meal plans, and trying to help program participants get the most value from the food packages they were receiving," Henderson explains.

Changes have occurred along with the evolution of the Food Stamp Program since the early 1970's, but a strong commitment to nutrition education on the part of Oklahoma state officials has allowed the unit to remain a strong and vital part of the state's Department of Human Services. Henderson's five nutrition specialists still "travel the circuit" teaching better eating habits and smarter purchasing practices.

## Recently introduced new USDA materials

On a cold and windy day this winter, nutrition specialists Cheryl Shults and Janet McNeil introduced the new Make Your Food Dollars Count materials to food stamp clients at the largest of the three Oklahoma County welfare offices in Oklahoma City.

Henderson's staff always enlists the support of the county administrator in laying the groundwork for such presentations. After being briefed on the new materials, Oklahoma County administrator Myrl

Hill included one condition in his agreement to cooperate: that the presentation be done not just once but several times throughout the day, so more clients could be reached.

"We serve 300 to 400 clients a day," Hill says. "One of their major problems, of course, is that they have severely limited incomes, so we're always interested in passing along tips on how to stretch those resources further."

The lesson plan Shults and McNeil followed included the new Make Your Food Dollars Count slide show and expounded on the concepts contained in the accompanying pamphlets.

"What was the major difference between the grape juice and the grape juice drink we saw in the slide show?" Shults asked the group, pointing out the importance of reading labels. After a pause, one woman in the audience replied, "It's

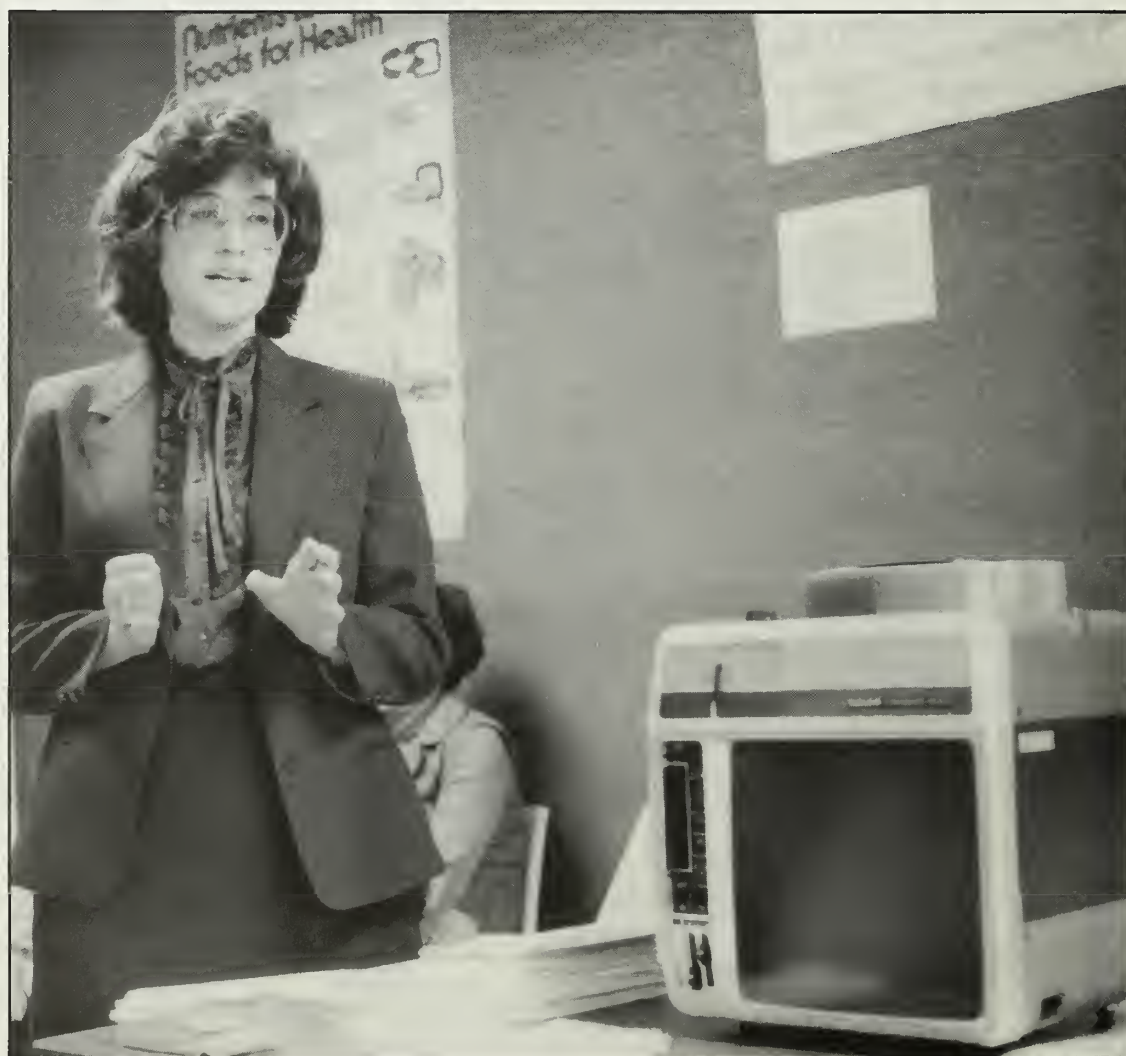
the amount of grape juice you get for your money."

## Groups respond in various ways

Observing the audience of 60 to 70 people, one could separate them into three distinct groups. About a third of the people showed an open and enthusiastic interest in what was being discussed. Another third showed subtle signs of interest, and the remaining third showed no interest at all. Their troubled eyes gave a clue to the seriousness of the problems they were mulling over in their minds.

The nutrition specialists have worked with low-income audiences in a variety of settings and are sensitive to the special needs of food stamp clients. They recognize the embarrassment many of the clients feel from having to be in a welfare office.

"These people are really more



At a welfare office in Oklahoma City, nutrition specialist Janet McNeil answers questions from a group of food stamp recipients. She has just finished showing the group the Make Your Food Dollars Count slide presentation and is summarizing key points from it.



interested than you might think," says Shults. During her presentations, she finds that as the more outgoing clients ask questions, those who appear not to be listening lean in closer to be sure to hear the answers.

Shults describes one technique she uses to allow clients anonymity. "I tell the audience they are welcome to take copies of any of the printed materials I have, then I leave the room for a while." She feels her absence reduces the pressure some clients might feel.

### **Caseworkers' help also important**

"It's also very important to get the caseworkers involved," McNeil says. At the Oklahoma City office, caseworkers helped by waiting long enough for McNeil and Shults to finish the point they were making before calling a client out of the room for an interview.

The nutrition specialists' presentations are not always done in welfare office waiting rooms. "I think we all prefer a classroom setting if we can arrange it, but we work with whatever area is available," says Patty Farmer, a nutrition specialist who works the northeast

area of the state.

According to Farmer, good advance work goes a long way toward ensuring the success of any of their presentations. "We include an invitation to an upcoming class in the regular food stamp mailings and put up posters throughout the community to increase interest," she says.

Since Farmer's area of the state has a lot of small towns, she must make herself aware of the resources available in each community. "A lesson on comparison shopping (which assumes access to several stores) wouldn't work at all in a small town with only one grocery store," Farmer says. Good working relationships with local welfare staff and feedback from participants help keep her on target.

### **Program reaches homebound elderly**

In addition to teaching nutrition concepts in group situations, the specialists also work with providers in the Non-Technical Medical Care (NTMC) Program to increase their understanding of nutrition and cost-effective food buying techniques.

NTMC is another program of the Oklahoma Department of Human

Services. Through it, certain food stamp and public assistance clients are hired as providers who see that the basic medical and nutritional needs of NTMC recipients are met. Most NTMC recipients are low-income homebound elderly, and many have special dietary needs.

"The providers usually shop with the recipients or shop for them," says nutrition specialist Margaret Hernasy. "I try to teach them that if you read labels and shop wisely, you don't have to purchase high-priced 'special foods' for special diets."

Hernasy says she and the rest of the staff will be able to use the new Make Your Food Dollars Count materials in teaching concepts like these to providers.

### **State's efforts win recognition**

Oklahoma has won national recognition for its nutrition education program. "Oklahoma has always been a leader in nutrition education," says June Burkett, Director of Nutrition and Technical Services for the Food and Nutrition Service's Southwest region.

"It was the first in the nation to include a nutrition education component in its food stamp state plan, and, as far as I know, it is still the only state that maintains a full-time staff especially for the purpose of improving the nutritional status of food stamp clients.

"With one minor change," Burkett continues, "the slogan used in the new Make Your Food Dollars Count materials captures what I see as the state's philosophy: 'Buy Better, Eat Better' to live better."

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*article by Kay Blakley  
photos by Larry Rana*



Cheryl Shults talks with another group at the Oklahoma City office, using a Make Your Food Dollars Count pamphlet on preparing nourishing snacks. Oklahoma's nutrition specialists make presentations at various locations throughout the state.



# Food Pantry Gets Nutrition Information To the Elderly

When the 1983 *Making Food Dollars Count* booklet first came out, many groups working with low-income people focused on getting the recipes and meal plans to young families.

As a member of a planning committee responsible for organizing a June 1984 workshop in Cincinnati, Mildred Whitehead realized that emphasizing the young excluded another group—the elderly.

It's easy to understand why Whitehead is so sensitive to the







Kay Stewart (above) and Peggy Simmons (right) have been helping Mildred Whitehead (opposite page) get nutrition information to the elderly. Stewart is resident manager of Belle



Towers, a senior citizens' high rise apartment. Simmons is a county extension agent who specializes in home economics.

needs of the elderly. She is executive director and founder of the Open Door Food Pantry in Hamilton, Ohio, a nonprofit organization that provides USDA surplus commodities and other free food to area residents in need of help. Each month, nearly 500 people come to the pantry for food, and many of them are elderly.

"More than 60 percent of the people who come in here are elderly," says Whitehead, who volunteers 30 hours or more a week to making the food pantry work. Many of the people Whitehead helps have spent a lifetime in the area. They've seen the good times when manufacturing was booming, but are now struggling because it's not.

"It's not easy to make ends meet, especially if you're old and don't have much money," says Whitehead. "Even with our help, most of the people who come in here just get by from month to month. When I heard about the *Making Food Dollars Count* booklet, I knew it was something that people who come to the pantry could use."

#### **Booklets given out with food**

Following the Cincinnati workshop, Whitehead arranged for a supply of the *Making Food Dollars Count* booklets to be sent to the pantry by FNS' Cincinnati field office.

To heighten interest, Whitehead and her staff of volunteers told

people coming to the pantry that by reading and using the booklet's ideas, they could save money on food.

"We believe that in addition to giving people the food they need, we should also teach them how to live better for less," Whitehead says. "And the elderly appreciate it even more than the younger people who come here."

"I can't say to what extent they use the information, but many times I've been told how good some of the recipes are, so I know they're at least reading the booklets."

#### **Luncheon offers special opportunity**

To give elderly people a chance to taste a meal made with the recipes, Whitehead and Kay Stewart, a member of the food pantry's advisory board, had a catered luncheon last fall.

The event was held in Hamilton at Belle Towers, a senior citizens' high-rise apartment, where Stewart is resident manager. All apartment residents and other interested senior citizens were invited. More than 60 people attended.

At the luncheon, Peggy Simmons, a county extension agent who specializes in home economics, talked about how eating nutritious and well-balanced meals is important in maintaining good health, especially for older people.

"The people were really receptive," says Simmons, "especially when I began talking about health."

Although Simmons' job regularly brings her into contact with the food pantry and its people, working with them on the luncheon was something new.

"The food really made it a suc-

cess," she says. "We featured meatballs and rice [a *Making Food Dollars Count* recipe], and they all loved it. I got more comments on how good the food was."

"One good thing about the recipes," says Simmons, a 17-year veteran with the Extension Service, "is that in most cases the ingredients are items that are normally kept in most households. People don't have to spend their money on exotic items which might not be used again."

"You can't expect to change a lifetime pattern of eating with a luncheon and a teaching session," says Simmons. "But we've made progress, nevertheless. One lady was diabetic and wanted to know how she could reduce her food budget."

"As it turns out, for years she had been buying only single-serving portions of food, not realizing that it was more economical to buy larger sizes and simply remove what she needed for the day's meal."

"This was some advice this lady could take with her. It was one way in which we made a difference. And who knows how many other people are being helped by similar ideas which we take for granted most people know."

#### **Other activities being planned**

Whitehead, Simmons, and Stewart have further plans for nutrition education activities.

Whitehead plans to continue including *Making Food Dollars Count* booklets with the food she gives out at the pantry. Simmons and Stewart plan to use menus and recipes from the booklet in a monthly newsletter produced for the high-rise residents. And, talk of another luncheon, perhaps this time for a different group of elderly people, has also been mentioned.

For more information, contact:

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Open Door Food Pantry  
2257 Pleasant Avenue  
Hamilton, Ohio 45015  
Telephone: (513) 868-3276

article and photos  
by Michael Fluharty

Left: Mildred Whitehead, executive director and founder of the Open Door Pantry, is pictured here with some of the food the pantry gives out. Nearly 500 people come to the pantry each month.



# Tailoring Materials To Local Needs

During every phase of the Making Food Dollars Count project, people at the local level have played key roles—not only in organizing and co-hosting workshops but also in tailoring materials to their communities' needs.

A good example is the workshop held last spring in Gallup, New Mexico, to introduce the meal plans and recipes USDA developed in 1983. The workshop set off an avalanche of activity that is still going strong.

## Several groups worked together

Three groups of nutrition professionals in and around the Gallup areas worked together on the workshop: the McKinley County Cooperative Extension Service, the McKinley County Dietetics Association, and the Indian Health Service.

"I was extremely impressed with the quality of work and the amount of enthusiasm these people were able to generate," says June Burkett, Director of Nutrition and Technical Services for the Food and Nutrition Service's Southwest region. "The entire community seemed to be behind the project."

Madaline Jennings, president of the local dietetics association, managed to get all of her local members involved in one way or another. Even one of the local grocers played a key role in making sure the workshop was successful.

"He was one of our most enthusiastic supporters," says Burkett. "He made arrangements for several exhibits at the workshop. One of the most interesting was a comparison of the quality of name brand

foods to store brands and generics. He also gave a presentation on consumerism that included not only good shopping tips but also insight into the retail grocery business."

## Work continued after workshop

At the end of the workshop, Burkett sat down with Jennings and a few of the other major organizers, to evaluate the day's activities.

Two suggestions for improvement came out of these discussions: (1) to open future workshops to the public rather than gearing them toward nutrition professionals and paraprofessionals and (2) to tailor the *Making Food Dollars Count* menus to reflect the food preferences of people in the Southwest.

Becky Lucero, a nutritionist on Burkett's regional office staff, and Betty McCreight, Extension home economist for the Gallup area, agreed to orchestrate the events necessary to accomplish those improvements and to present the new localized menus and recipes at a follow-up workshop.

Lucero, providing technical assistance and guidance from a USDA perspective, and McCreight, acting as a local catalyst, once again called on several members of the community to lend support in their particular areas of expertise.

A planning committee which included representatives from local Indian Health Service hospitals, the Navajo Community Nutrition Education Program, other county Extension Service offices, the local food stamp office, and, again, some of the locally owned grocery stores

was formed.

Work began in earnest when selected committee members were called together in August 1984 to develop the revised menus.

"We drew from both personal and professional experience," Lucero says. "We worked for 3 solid days trying to come up with nutritionally sound menus based on foods people in this area could relate to. The diversity of the population in the Gallup area was a real eye-opener for me."

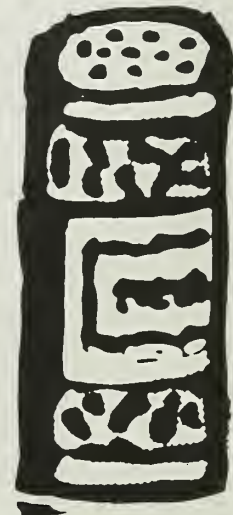
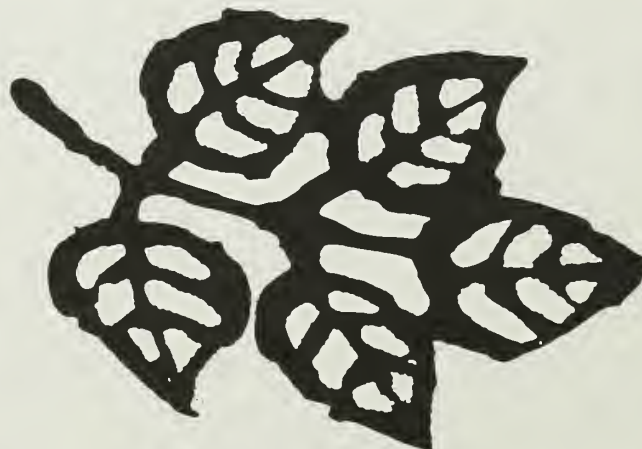
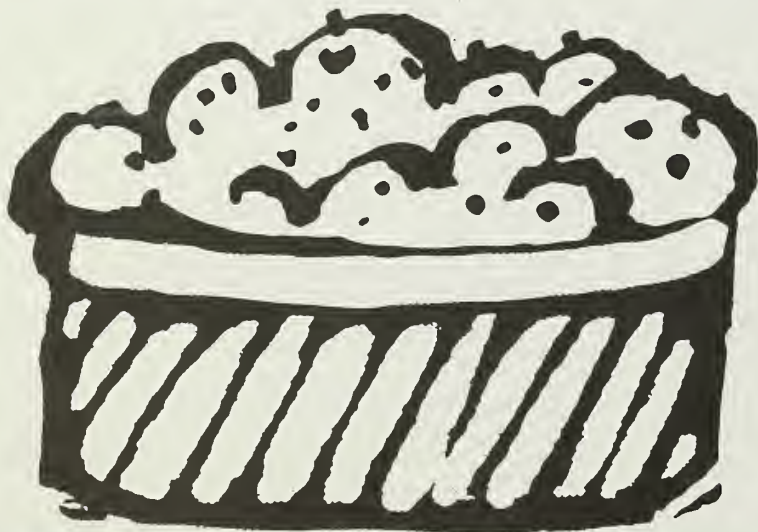
As Betty McCreight explains, the area has a large Hispanic population, as well as a large Indian population. "Matters are further complicated," she says, "by the fact that the Indian population is broken down into several different tribes, each with its own set of food preferences and traditional and cultural practices."

## Developing the Indian menus

Karen Arviso, director of the Navajo Community Nutrition Program, was a member of the group working on the revised menus. After the committee had come up with suggestions for Indian menus, Arviso asked Linda Christensen, a nutritionist for the Navajo WIC program, to make any further revisions she thought appropriate.

One change Christensen made was to adjust the recipes to serve larger households. The USDA recipes were for a family of four, but most Navajo families are larger than that.

"The average Navajo household consists of four children and two adults," Christensen explains. "It is





also fairly common for grandparents to live in the household. But, to reach a middle ground, we geared our recipes toward a family of six."

She also tried to reach a "middle ground" in deciding which foods to include in the menus. "Most of the older people don't like foods too spicy, but the younger ones favor some spices—especially chiles," Christensen says.

"We used a lot of the traditional foods such as mutton and haniigai (a dried corn product similar to hominy), but we also included non-traditional items that are readily available, easy to prepare, and at least potentially palatable to Navajo tastebuds," she adds.

#### **Other considerations taken into account**

One item Christensen had wanted to include as a "treat" was pudding. Refrigeration is required, though, for pudding to set, so she substituted gelatin in that particular menu. It will jell at room temperature.

"Only 55 percent of the reservation population has electricity," Christensen explains, "and many of those who have electricity still don't have refrigeration."

The lack of electricity, refrigeration, and running water—all of those were prime considerations in planning a week's menus. Fresh meats, fruits, and vegetables were included in the menus for Friday and Saturday when most people do their shopping.

Menus for the middle of the week called for canned and dried products such as spaghetti made with canned beef, beans, tortillas, blue cornmeal mush or ready-to-eat cereals, stewed dried fruits, and "sterile" milk that does not require refrigeration.

Menus and recipes specifically

tailored toward the Navajos, however, will not necessarily fit the needs of other Indian groups. The Zuni Indians, for example, use very little mutton but a great deal of beef. Then there are the urban Indians who may combine traditional Indian foods with popular Anglo and Hispanic dishes.

"In finalizing the menus, we tried to make the recipes generic enough that all groups could use them," Lucero says. "A stew recipe, for instance, might call for 1 pound of meat (mutton, pork, or beef) rather than specifying a particular kind of meat," she explains.

"The lack of refrigeration will not be a factor with many of the other Indian groups," she continues, "but including canned and dried products will still be appropriate because many of the people are accustomed to using USDA commodities which come in less perishable (canned or dried) form anyway."

#### **Working on the Hispanic menus**

Lucero worked closely with Imelda Garcia, Extension home economist for Rio Arriba County, to develop menus and recipes for the Hispanic population.

"I think the Hispanic menus were a lot easier to work with than the Indian menus," says Garcia. "Our main goal was to include some of the more familiar foods in order to get people to accept the overall concept behind the Making Food Dollars Count project."

The Hispanic menus include such traditional dishes as tacos, huevos rancheros (fried eggs over corn tortillas, topped with chili sauce and cheese), and chiles rellenos (chiles stuffed with ground beef and onion, then dipped in an egg batter and fried).

#### **Workshop will be held this spring**

The new recipes will be introduced at a second Gallup workshop this spring. The workshop will be open to the public with special efforts being made by local food stamp officials to encourage food stamp recipients to attend and participate.

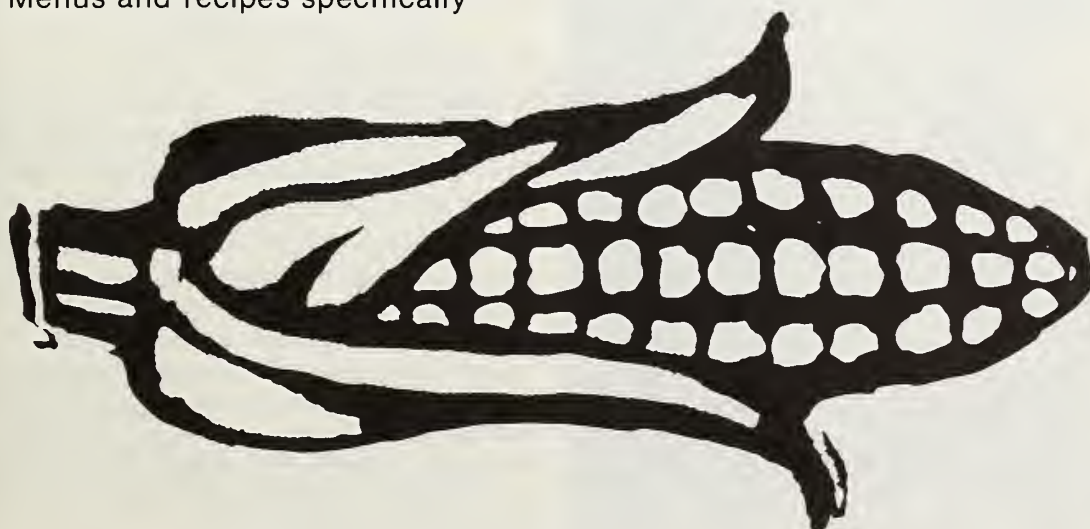
The agenda will include sessions on adding variety to your diet, using USDA commodities, and planning and shopping wisely. In addition to getting the revised menus, participants will also get copies of the new pamphlets and other materials USDA has prepared for food stamp recipients and other low-income consumers. (See article on page 2.)

According to Betty McCreight, revising the menus and planning the follow-up workshop has been a lot of work, but it's been interesting for everyone involved. Preparation for the workshop, she says, has been as valuable a learning experience for the professionals as the new materials will be for the workshop participants.

"There were really two objectives behind the Making Food Dollars Count project," says June Burkett. "One, of course, was to teach low-income people how to spend their food dollars wisely. The other was to encourage nutrition professionals to pool their resources so everyone could do a more effective job of teaching those concepts. I think the Gallup project is an excellent example of the second objective working at its best."

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*article by Kay Blakley*





# Nutrition Educator Honored for Her Work

A 42-year career of teaching others about food and nutrition qualifies Alberta Gaines as an expert on the subject of nutrition education. She knows what the problems are and the best ways to solve them, but she'd be the first to admit that achieving changes in people's diets and food buying habits is a slow process.

Gaines began her career as a vocational home economics teacher in a rural Tennessee high school. She joined the University of Tennessee Cooperative Extension Service in the mid-1950's, serving as an Extension home economist (then called a home demonstration agent) and 4-H Club advisor.

When the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) began in Tennessee in 1969, Gaines joined the EFNEP staff in Shelby County—one of the first counties in the state to offer the program. She served as coordinator of Shelby County's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

for 13 years until she retired in 1983.

## **Has seen some gradual changes**

During her 40-plus years of working with homemakers and young people, Gaines has seen some gradual changes occur.

"There's definitely more concern today about the effect of food on health," she says, "and Southern cooking methods are finally changing. Families are learning to pan broil meats, to use less salt and fat in cooking vegetables, and to cut extra fat off meats. They're also eating more vegetables."

In working with low-income families, Gaines has found that demonstrations are by far the best teaching technique. They are especially helpful in teaching people who have short attention spans or who cannot read.

Over the years, Gaines has given demonstrations in food stamp offices, WIC clinics, homes, and gro-

cery stores. She has taken people to grocery stores and shown them how to do comparison shopping and unit pricing.

She has also become something of a local celebrity for her expertise in demonstrating how to prepare a variety of inexpensive, tasty dishes using beans, such as bean loaves, bean patties, and bean salads. She appeared in an educational television series about cooking with dried beans.

## **People believe what they see**

Seeing and tasting are the best motivators, Gaines says. "You have to show people how to prepare something and then persuade them to sample it," she explains. "Telling them about it and giving them a recipe won't work. They'll just shake their heads and say, 'I'm not going to eat that.'"

Gaines has found that seeing is believing when it comes to food buying, too. One example Gaines recalls is the struggle she had convincing the women enrolled in EFNEP that neckbones—which many families bought regularly because of their low cost—were actually a poor buy. By picking the meat off the bone, Gaines was able to show the women the small amount of meat they got for their money as compared to other types of meat.

Whatever the teaching technique used, says Gaines, interesting people in nutrition education is a challenge. "Young people are the most receptive," she says. "Adults are receptive only when you address what they perceive they need."

## **Feels community groups can help**

She believes the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program,



Although she is now retired, Alberta Gaines continues to help people in her community. Here, she visits a woman who has recently moved into a home built by Habitat for Humanity, a volunteer organization that builds or rehabilitates homes for the needy. *Page 15:* During a visit to a Memphis food stamp office, she talks with a woman about how careful buying can help her spend less on food.



with its emphasis on one-to-one individualized instruction provided by program aides, is the ideal solution to providing food and nutrition information effectively to low-income homemakers. But the program is not available in every community, she says, and where available, is effective only to the extent that the program's workers are motivated.

Even where nutrition education programs exist, Gaines feels other persons in the community can and should help. Says Gaines, "Volunteers can help in community centers where USDA commodities are distributed by giving demonstrations about how to prepare the foods or by passing out preparation and storage information."

"Grocery stores can help by making more displays of items that are low-cost and nutritious and giving the displays high visibility."

Gaines can cite dozens of instances where other organizations have helped her in her work with EFNEP, but two examples of worthwhile projects stand out.

Several years ago, the University of Tennessee School of Medicine offered to give women enrolled in the Shelby County EFNEP program complete physical examinations for \$2.00 each. Since she suspected that some of her clients had health problems requiring special diets, Gaines readily accepted the offer and arranged for 96 women to be examined.

Two of the women were discovered to have serious illnesses, and many others were found to have nutrition-related health problems, such as calcium and vitamin deficiencies. These medical findings reinforced what Gaines had been teaching clients about the relationship between food and good health and also allowed her to target her teaching toward the specific nutritional deficiencies of the women.

As an outgrowth of this experience, the Red Cross, a Memphis television station, and a local drug-store chain now annually hold a health fair in Shelby County, conducting free medical screenings for area residents and particularly for those individuals with limited incomes.

#### **Nutrition council provided leaflets**

The Shelby County Nutrition Council is another group that contributed significantly to nutrition



education in the community. Although it no longer exists, the council, consisting of individuals from food-related organizations and businesses, for many years developed monthly leaflets on food and nutrition topics for distribution to food stamp recipients.

The leaflets were prepared by a different council member each month on behalf of his or her organization and generally dealt with seasonal foods and how to buy and cook them. Gaines and her program aides distributed the leaflets every month at food stamp issuance offices and occasionally questioned food stamp clients to find out if they used any of the information.

The Nutrition Council continued this cooperative activity for 5 or 6 years with good results. Gaines cites this activity as one she would like to see re-initiated in her county as well as begun in other communities.

#### **Still shares her expertise**

Although now retired, Gaines continues to find ways to use her expertise in helping others in her community. She admits it's hard to say "no" to a request for help.

Her current volunteer projects include evaluating menus for day care centers; planning menus for a local church's youth activities; serving on the Hunger Task Force of the Episcopal Diocese of West Ten-

nessee to provide technical assistance and services to food pantries, soup kitchens, and other emergency food providers. She also serves on the boards of the Red Cross and the Shelby County Extension Service's EFNEP Council.

Lately, she has become involved in the work of Habitat for Humanity, a volunteer organization that builds or rehabilitates homes for the poor. In addition to serving on the family selection committee, which chooses recipients for the organization's services, Gaines assists the recipient families with meal planning and food purchasing after they have moved into their new homes.

When the Food and Nutrition Service's Memphis field office staff held a workshop last year to introduce the Make Your Food Dollars Count nutrition education materials, Gaines volunteered to help register participants and perform other last-minute details.

Much to her surprise, during the workshop FNS' Southeast regional administrator David B. Alspach presented her with an award recognizing her many years of service in providing nutrition education to low-income Tennesseans.

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*article by Brenda Schuler  
photos by Larry Rana*



# Operation Good Health: Giving Kids an Early Start

Children in Boston's School District V will have a chance to learn good eating habits early, thanks to a newly launched project named "Operation Good Health."

Through the project, a group of elementary and high school teachers are being trained to integrate nutrition lessons into basic classroom instruction, and schools are sponsoring a variety of nutrition activities to help children understand the importance of nutrition to good health.

The project is being sponsored jointly by District V, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation. The March of Dimes is covering the direct costs of the teachers' training; USDA is providing staff time and course materials; and the schools are enlisting interested teachers and setting the plan into motion.

## **Four schools are taking part**

Four schools in Dorchester are taking part in the pilot project, which began in October with in-service training for 15 teachers. Actual classroom activities began in January.

We're delighted to be working on this with the schools and the March of Dimes," says Lynn Wonders, director of Special Supplemental Food Programs for FNS' Northeast region.

As Wonders explains, Operation Good Health began as an offshoot of the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Campaign in which more than 50 government, professional, and voluntary organizations agreed to work to improve maternal and infant health through public education.

To support this goal, USDA, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the March of Dimes prepared a number of resource packages, including lesson plans for pregnant teenagers, for use in health, food assistance, and other nutrition programs.

Wonders felt the best way to make this information available to teenagers and younger children would be through the schools, and Ross Mauro, executive director of the Massachusetts Bay Chapter of the March of Dimes, agreed.

"Nutrition education has been a priority with us for quite a while now," Mauro says. "We know that good eating habits established early are most likely to be retained, and we were eager to see our informational materials used directly in the schools."

## **School officials eager to help**

Florence Johnson, an FNS employee and former teacher in District V, enlisted the cooperation of District V superintendent Mildred





Griffith. The school district, like USDA, offered to match the March of Dimes' financial contribution with donations of time and materials.

The largest of Boston's nine decentralized school districts, District V includes low-income areas with a high incidence of maternal and child health problems, such as low birth weight among infants.

"District V was a natural choice for the project," says Wonders. "Our goal is not only to improve the health of the district's school children, but to prepare them for their future role as parents."

Superintendent Griffith sees the project as a way to help the children's families as well. "I subscribe to the concept that early intervention and prevention are better than correcting problems after they occur," she says.

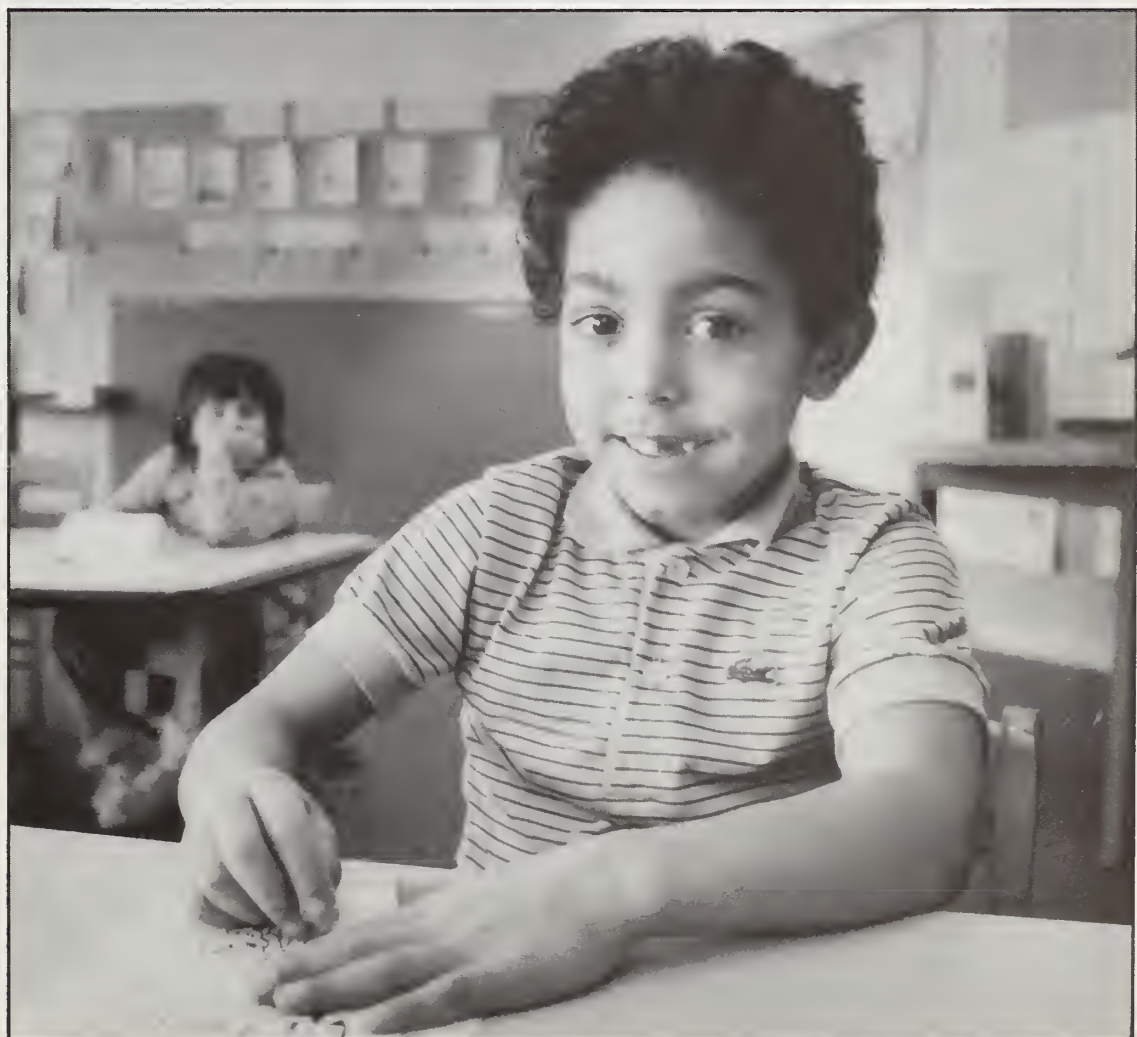
"We in the schools have the closest contact with children and their families, and if we teach children good nutrition, they will influence their parents. When it comes to sensitivity to good nutrition," she adds, "we're not starting at ground zero, but there is definitely a need for improvement."

### **Teachers earn graduate credit**

Teachers participating in Operation Good Health earn graduate credit at no cost for a series of weekly classes at the Teacher Center in Dorchester. The nutrition course is taught by registered dietitian Denise Barra, whose salary is paid for by the March of Dimes grant.

Homework for the teachers is translating the course content into lesson plans they will use in their classrooms. Teachers working at the middle and high school levels, for example, use the information in their health education and home economics classes. Elementary school teachers incorporate the material into math, science, social studies, and language lessons.

They look for ways to make the lessons fun and to encourage children to tell the good foods story in their own words and pictures. "Our purpose," says Griffith, "is not to change the focus of teaching, but



Second graders at the John P. Holland School have fun translating the good foods message into their own words and pictures. The little girl on page 16 decided to use a photo of comedian Eddie Murphy on her poster.





to generate interest and excitement.” The course has some surprises for participating teachers. “Most teachers have not been trained in nutrition,” says instructor Barra. “They share misconceptions common to the general public. For instance, they were amazed to learn most people get double the protein they need. They were also surprised that we need calcium at every age.”

“People generally think there’s no need in your diet for high calcium foods like milk once you’ve stopped growing, but that’s not true at all. Among women, there is an alarmingly high incidence of bone disease from too little calcium.”

Barra provides basic instruction which teachers then adapt to the level of their students. She keeps on hand for their use a catalog of nutrition materials compiled for the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Campaign and copies of FNS publications.

Before every evening session, the teachers share ideas on how to present complex concepts in words or examples that children can readily grasp.

### **Lessons tailored to children’s needs**

Vigermira Rivera, who teaches a bilingual group of second graders in the John P. Holland school, translates her lessons into Spanish. “Some of the parents of my children don’t read,” she says. “The children’s pictures and writing are a good way to send home the message of food and health.”

Margaret Wassell teaches a group of 5- to 7-year-olds with special language needs, at the same school. “I develop language lessons around nutrition themes,” she says. “They have to be short to keep the children’s attention, and I repeat the same theme in different ways throughout the week.”

“For a lesson on fruits, I used a kit with artificial fruit to help them understand how different nutrients protect your health and which foods are rich in vitamins. I also brought a snack of apples, oranges, and pears, and it was the first time some of the children had tasted

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Teacher Margaret Wassell develops language lessons around nutrition themes for her students. Here some students help her set up a table filled with “smart snacks.” Page 19: Messages on eating right come in all shapes and sizes at the Holland School.



pears. If I hadn't taken this course, I probably would not have made nutrition a focus of our lessons," she says.

Because teacher training is voluntary and affects only random classes, a creative writing and art contest is being used to reach more students in the four participating schools. The contest gives children an opportunity to demonstrate with original work what they have learned about good eating habits.

Elementary students enter drawings and slogans. Middle and high schools students submit original compositions, such as stories, skits or poems that carry out the good nutrition theme.

Contest entries will compete for the grand prize of a trip to Washington, D.C., and runner-up awards of field trips, restaurant dinners, and certificates. All selections will be considered for use by

high school students in writing a script and filming a videotape that explains the program to other interested schools.

#### **A model for other states**

The March of Dimes has prepared videotape vignettes of the project for use in local segments of its annual fundraising telethon.

"March of Dimes seed money has allowed District V to test this new approach to teaching good nutrition," Mauro says. "Where the project goes from here depends on the interest and support of school officials."

In the meantime, Operation Good Health is a model other states with Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies coalitions may wish to explore with the March of Dimes, according to Wonders.

"Both the U.S. Department of

Agriculture and the March of Dimes have developed a great deal of resource material to promote maternal and child health through public education," she says, "but we think this is a unique example of cooperation at the local school level.

"We encourage coalitions in other regions and states to draw on our experience to develop joint projects of their own."

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